

Presentation at Launch of Barbados Best Employers 2018
Winning in the Medium Category 2016

Protocol

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Ladies & gentlemen

“Winners are not people who never fail but people who never quit”

Good morning,

It is an honour for me to share with you the path we have travelled to becoming the winner in medium category of the Barbados’ Best Employers Award Programme 2016.

I will share with you firstly GGIL’s People Philosophy, then I will give you some insight into the process towards winning the BBE award, my experience as a participant and the benefits of the Barbados’ Best Employers programme to our organisation.

Our People Philosophy

We at GGIL truly believe that our employees are our most valuable asset and we are committed to ensuring that our policies and practices support this belief. One of our objectives therefore is to **be an employer of choice**.

We embrace the philosophy that “value is created by satisfied, loyal and productive employees.”(Harvard Business Review March-April 1994). Satisfied employees (internal customers) play a pivotal role in driving external customer satisfaction, retention, loyalty and ultimately revenue growth and profitability.

Our Performance Management Philosophy

We believe that maintaining a high performance culture is a continuous process which will, *inter alia*:

- Respect the feelings and rights of others and convey the fundamental belief that all employees have worth
- Avoid actions and decisions that can disengage employees
- Provide timely and honest feedback to employees
- Support actions and decisions that increase employees' natural ability to self-motivate

Our employees can expect:

- Respect
- Fair treatment
- Fair compensation - pay for performance
- Opportunities to learn and grow
- Safe and comfortable work environment
- Appreciation
- Involvement - being treated as an important member of the team

The Process

Our road to winning in 2016 was carefully charted, spanning a period of four years! Back in 2012 we were first invited to participate in the Barbados' Best Employers Programme. At that time, we agreed to participate but we also agreed internally, that we would use the interviews and staff surveys that were to be conducted by Caribbean Catalyst, solely for the purpose of obtaining an independent baseline assessment of our local HR practices. We did not enter the competition in 2012 with any expectation of winning!

It was a rigorous and invaluable assessment process conducted by Caribbean Catalyst with both management and staff being interviewed and assessed separately. Assessments covered key aspects of our organisation: culture, morale, employee communications, work environment, work life balance, community involvement, performance management and measurement system, development and career opportunities, compensation and benefits.

Even though the management at the company always felt that our HR practices were good, **there were clearly certain weaknesses to which we were blinded but which the BBE Programme highlighted for us.** Needless to say, we did not qualify as a finalist ... but that was not our objective!

We took those results (debriefing) and contracted Caribbean Catalyst (Laura Husbands) to conduct some staff focus group surveys to drill down further and to find out, in more detail, what the staff was really saying to us. The data from these surveys were categorised and formed the basis of our HR strategy. This HR strategy was then written into our overall strategic plan for the 2014-2016 period – and it was a plan to which all of our staff had the opportunity to contribute. We held a one day retreat at the Hilton Barbados Resort at the beginning of 2014. At that retreat we shared the complete strategic plan with staff and invited them to volunteer to work on our strategic teams which were being established to ensure the successful execution of our plans.

Having successfully rolled out these plans with significant buy-in from staff, many of whom volunteered to work alongside management as members of the various strategic teams, we then started the process of continuous measuring and monitoring through periodic internal assessments. We invited our AVP of Corporate Planning and Implementation, to conduct internal surveys for us. These surveys covered every aspect of our organisation: staff engagement, leaders harnessing engagement for productivity, leadership effectiveness, office culture, employee communication, performance management/recognition, work environment, work life balance, corporate vision and mission, staff development and career opportunities, compensation and benefits, quality and customer focus and community involvement.

This was an ongoing process that we took very seriously, taking timely corrective action wherever it was warranted!

When we were invited again in 2014 to participate in the Barbados' Best Employers Programme, we felt that, even though we had made significant progress from 2012, we still were not ready for the competition. We therefore did not participate in 2014 but had set our sights on being a finalist in 2016 and we were committed to achieving this goal. Our Head office, in particular our Chief Executive Officer, was very supportive of our efforts and indicated that he was eagerly awaiting the results in 2016. That certainly increased the pressure, but we remained focused on our target.

There were 10 persons who attended the 2016 awards ceremony comprising management, HR and general staff. It was a tense and anxious moment for us all

as we watched the video clips of our competitors, and I know that many of us held our breath! To hear our company being declared the winner was – to use a popular term – “an epic moment” for us; and after leaving the Hilton Hotel, we right away bought wine and returned to the office where all staff celebrated our achievement. To this day, we continue to highlight this accomplishment on our letterheads and emails which carry the BBE Winner –Medium Category logo **right next to** our corporate logo.

It was a proud moment for us – not just because we were winners – but especially because we knew that we could not have done it without the keen participation of everyone at Guardian General. To know that the entire staff body were united in achieving this goal was definitely as important as taking that award home!



My Experience as a Participant

The BBE Programme was most enjoyable and of course a learning experience! Working with Caribbean Catalyst has always been easy because of the excellent talent pool working at that organisation even though the process is rigorous. There were many lessons learnt along the way, such as:

- There is a direct correlation between high performing organisations and effective leadership
- Organisations perform best when staff is motivated and engaged. I call this synchronization!
- Strategic plans are nothing more than words on paper if not executed effectively. Monitoring is a critical aspect of the implementation process
- There is no alternative to effective communication with staff
- Employees are bursting with ideas and await the right environment in which to share such ideas

- There must be mutual respect within the organisation
- Staff must be appreciated and this must be shown
- When staff members are productive they must be rewarded in some form

Benefits of the BBE Programme to our Organization

Participating in the BBE programme has been of tremendous benefit to us at Guardian General. There has been an improvement in all key areas measured when compared to where we were in 2012:

	2012	2016
Culture	72.6	84.16
Employee Communications	76.2	82.49
Work Environment	80	84.44
Work Life balance	69.9	80.37
Community involvement	78.2	87.32
Performance Management	75.8	85.52
Development & Career Opportunities	73.8	83.76

Employee Motivation and Engagement has been the key!!!!

Our employees are engaged!

- Talk about the staff party in 2017
- They continue to work on strategic teams

We therefore do not think that it was a coincidence that our best financial year was in 2016!

Call to Action

Invite those present who have not yet participated in the programme to register this year.

Encourage those who may have entered before but were unsuccessful to persevere but to develop and implement a strategic plan. Remember

“Winners are not people who never fail but people who never quit”

Thanks to God without His help this would not have been possible.

Thanks to Caribbean Catalyst, Rosalind Jackson and Laura Husbands.

Thanks to staff for their continued sterling efforts and hard work and initiative.

Thank you all!

Good Luck and Best Wishes to all the all!!